



## THE LATE ALPHONSE DE CANDOLLE.

AT the May-meeting of the Field-Naturalists' Club of Victoria, Baron F. von Mueller, K.C.M.G., referred to the death of the above distinguished botanist in the following words:—

MR. PRESIDENT, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,—A great man of science has passed away, Alphonse de Candolle, at Geneva on the 4th of April! He soon followed Richard Owen, and thus organic natural history in each of its main-divisions lost highly prominent leaders. Both became almost nonagenarians, and both maintained their grand mental faculties unimpaired to the last. Alphonse de Candolle's genius arose under unsurpassed advantages. In his illustrious parent, Augustin Pyramus de Candolle, centred the highest achievements within the science of plants as a whole during the earlier part of this century. Even a grandsire of the elder De Candolle had at the time of Ray and Tournefort as an amateur rendered that name, subsequently so illustrious, already known in botanic science;—thus, —like in the genealogy of the Jussieus, the Gmelins, the Darwins, the Hookers,—also the Geneva great dynasty of phytologists has passed through several generations, so that at the solemn centennial celebration of the Linnean Society one of the two first medals, then bestowed on Alphonse de Candolle by that venerable union of zoologists and botanists, could be received for him by a grandson as his personal representative. Great men with the feelings of Augustin and Alphonse de Candolle deserve such proud gratification with hopes so cheering for the future! When in 1839 the originator of their worldwide family-fame introduced the next heir of his renown to the empire of science (in the 7th volume of his universal description of the plants of the globe) in offering the Campanulaceæ, it was with the wording “auctore Alph. D. C. dilectissimo filio;”—and when in 1844 the 8th volume of the “Prodromus” had to be issued by the mourning son solely, it was in the following words: “Memoriæ suavissimæ parentis optimi Alphonsus filius patria vestigia passu licet non æquo persequutus pio animo dedicabat.” But Alphonse de Candolle, whose irreparable loss science has now also to deplore, had already stepped youthfully forward with his first independent essay in 1830,—a large monography, requiring years of special previous research; and much earlier indeed he had aided his father in annual notes on rare plants of the botanic garden of Montpellier, where next month also Augustin Pyramus de Candolle's memory will be honoured at the tricentennial jubilee of that celebrated university, of which he was during a series of years in his specialities so great an ornament. De Candolle's “Prodromus” will for all time remain the chief work not only for the specific description of the dicotyledonous plants of the whole earth, but also for the detailed elaboration of the Candollean system; and this again in its main features must remain the scheme of classification for all futurity,—whereas the permanent systematic fixing of the genera in their modern aspect and now vast accumulation has fallen to the share of two British authors, George Bentham and Joseph Hooker. Nearly twenty volumes appeared of this “Prodromus” with the help of the best investigators of each period. Since 1878 this unique work has been followed by ten volumes of miscellaneous monographies of Phanerogams, for which Alphonse de Candolle still furnished the Smilacinæ,—copies of the volumes being successively received by the writer of this necrologe from the author's own hands. To be actually a monographer of whole large orders of plants through half a century stands as an unexampled feat in the annals of science. But he had the further triumph, to see his accomplished son, Casimir de Candolle, make his grand *débüt* several years earlier by already monographing the Piperaceæ for the “Prodromus,”—that work throughout being written in Latin for use of all nations in its originality. What endless information, what unceasing delight has been afforded by this grand serial, and will continue to be afforded! The almost unparalleled literary activity of him, for whom we now are mourning, gave further vent to multifarious other productions for the enrichment of science. Thus as early as 1835 he issued his two large volumes, “Introduction à



l'Etude de la Botanique," for teaching purposes. Various publications followed, irrespective of the vast and telling contributions to the "Prodromus." In 1855 appeared his memorable and large work on the geography of plants, involving ample considerations of achievements in sciences collateral to abstract phytology; in this book for the first time and mainly from Melbourne-material the Flora of Central Australia came under comparative consideration and connected review. In 1867 Alphonse de Candolle became the principal legislator for the naming of plants through his "Lois de la Nomenclature de Botanique," then adopted by the International Botanic Congress in Paris. In 1880 came out a special volume on sound rules, how plants professionally ought to be diagnosticised, with multifarious appertaining data as the outcome of sixty years' severe experience of his own. The year 1883 saw appear his "Origine des Plantes cultivées," a monument of studies, requiring reference even to works in the oriental languages; this book again is the result of that extraordinary methodicity, evinced in all his extensive writings, and acquired as a heirloom from Augustin Pyramus de Candolle; it elucidates with infinite patience and rare grasp of mind a number of questions, bearing on this abtruse and complicate rural subject, much buried in far past history and often only to be unravelled from distorted traditions and other unreliable records previously accepted. But Alphonse de Candolle's attention was not limited to what his special callings demanded from him; because his history of the sciences of the last two centuries (1872), therefore of the progress of nearly the whole of newer knowledge through the world, bears witness of the wondrous range of his perceptions and inquiries. With filial piety he devoted the latest of his volumes to reminiscences of Augustin Pyramus de Candolle. What could be more fascinating, than to learn of the personal contact of many bearers of sciences belonging to different centuries? What could be more elevating, than glimpses on the individual and mutual relations of great masters in knowledge through several centuries from the standpoints of such rulers of mental efforts as these two botanic coryphæans? What consolation must it have been to Alphonse de Candolle, when passing away, to see in hopeful brightness these touches in an elder science-world renewed in a younger one by Casimir de Candolle at the verge of a century, through which his two nearest ancestors were so luminous? The vivid interest, displayed by the Genevese phytologic sage in all that concerned his favourite science, remained undiminished to the last. Even within about two weeks of his death he pondered over progressive details for the greatest of his works, as shown by a last communication to the author of these lines, who with pride can look on a series of letters, received from Alphonse de Candolle during more than three decades of time, and who is reminded of similar parting lines from Lindley, Bentham and others of the foremost in phytology. As an instance of the keen circumspectness and tender solicitude, with which Alphonse de Candolle watched over the scientific welfare of others, it may here be stated, that when one of the Melbourne illustrated works on plants approached its close, he entirely on his own impulse and sole accord, without the slightest knowledge of the author and utterly unsought, addressed himself to the authorities here in terms of appreciation, which by the weight of his mastership could not fail to exercise a beneficial influence for future efforts on this side of the world. That such a man earns the admiration of all the workers in his or in kindred fields, was a triumphant sequence. Homage was paid him from all parts of the world. English science honoured him with the foreign fellowship of the Royal Society. An extensive Australian genus of plants of delicate loveliness bears his name. Few mortals can ever rank with the De Candolles on their own paths of science, indeed very few! Their glorious acquisitions were for rural wealth, for industrial gain, for higher education, for joyful recreation, for elevating contemplations, and above all for solemn religious interpretations! Such then must ever tend to exercise in their own way an incalculable influence on the well-being of the whole world of mortals!

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